

Letter and enclosure from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, October 6, 1882, with transcript

Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel (Hubbard) Bell. L N. Y. Central R. R. — Friday, Oct. 6th, 1882. My darling May:

I received your note enclosing Chester's just as I was leaving New York and I must say I was considerably surprised at the contents of the latter letter. Mr. Johnson told me before I left Washington that his house was to be sold by public auction and that he and his brother hoped to get \$8000 or \$9000 for it — and he stated that it would require \$7000 to pay off mortgage and taxes etc., so as to clear them. He stated that his brother had arranged with friends to bid up the house to \$6000 or it was certain not to go under that — but that would not clear them of debt. I told him that I was sorry that I could not recommend it to you as an investment — as we did not want that class of property.

I told him however that if his brother would like me to bid it up to \$7000 at the sale and would make a proposition to me to take a lease of the property for a term of years at a rent sufficient to pay good income upon investment in case the property should unfortunately be knocked down to me at that price — that I would talk over the matter with you and Mr. Hubbard. Mr. Johnson consulted with his brother and they decided that they did not want me to do anything about it. Under these circumstances I thought no more about it — and did not think even to speak of it to you in Newport. When I received your telegram about it I immediately telegraphed to Chester that you objected to his proposed investment, and that Johnson must not rely upon us in any way whatever.

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By the bye — please send some money to that poor Edward Wilson — I have telegraphed Mrs. Wilson to call upon you so that you may have the opportunity not only of giving her the money but also of seeing whether she would be at all suitable as a housekeeper.

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Sophie arrived safely but is evidently far from well. What an unmanly thing of Mr. Home to allow his wife to come to America on his account in this way. I have told Sophie that we have no proposition to make to Mr. Home but that we are willing — as we have always been — to take into consideration any business proposition made by him to us — with every wish to oblige him. I have also declined to discuss matters with her and I have told her it lowers Mr. Home in my estimation to have him put forward his wife in this way. I said it was no use — I would not consent to any arrangement whatever with her though she were to come all round the world for the purpose. I would not be a party to her being treated in this way. Mr. Home must himself arrange any business with me. I intend to write a good rousing letter to Mr. Home to-day but shall not send it without your approval. I shall also write a note to Sophie from Brantford tomorrow after the funeral — stating in black and white what I have said verbally — so that there may be no misunderstandings.

Poor Carrie must feel so terribly alone at this time that I felt it my duty to go to Brantford to be present at the funeral. Polly Cathcart was to have visited Carrie and her mother this summer but postponed her visit for a few months and by this postponement has missed forever the chance of seeing the mother from whom she has been separated for so many years.

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Your father wrote to me in Newport recommending us to invest about \$10,000 in some new Telephone Co. in Pennsylvania. Will you please tell him for me that I do not want you to put money into any Telephone Co. — as an investment — and would only think of it if it was for the purpose of helping Charlie or Willie Ker. We have enough money invested in Telephone — and I only care to make permanent investments now in Government or State Bonds or something of that kind. Of course Charlie's Investment of \$900 — he wrote about — we would be glad to take off his hands so as to release the money he wishes to use in Baltimore.

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I drew in N. Y. 2 cheques on Newport Bank. One for \$16. — hotel expenses — and the other for \$60. Canadian expenses etc. I shall require to draw some more I expect before I get home and will let you know the amounts to enter in the cheque-book.

It costs so much to send a horse by rail that I decided in the present unsettled state of our plans to send Perrin on to Washington. He will go by water to Baltimore and then drive to Washington. It is a good deal to trust a new man with but he has a good honest looking face and I hope he will arrive safely. I gave him a note to Chester — telling him to see Fitch, Fox & Brown and ascertain whether matters have progressed sufficiently in regard to purchase of our house — to allow Perrin to use the stable and if not he is to board out the horse — but on no account use your father's stable.

I have come to the end of my paper and have only room for my proposed movements. Arrive Toronto 4:30 this afternoon (Friday). 4 Leave Toronto tomorrow morning at 7:10!!! Meet my father at Hamilton 9:10 arriving at Brantford about 11 o'clock. Leave Brantford Monday morning about same time — and now with much love to you my little wife and to my sweet babies and to Mama and Grace.

Your loving husband, Alec.

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(No heading on letter — attached to a letter written to Mrs. Bell).

So many misunderstandings arise from different constructions put upon verbal statements that I think it well to put in black and white the substance of what I have said to you recently concerning Capt. Home's affairs. This is all the more necessary as I have just seen a letter written by Capt. Home in which there appears such a monstrous distortion of all that I have done and tried to do for you and him that I can only conclude in charity to Mr. Home as I have done for months past that his mind is in a morbid condition upon the subject of wrongs.

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In this letter he says that he was obliged to hand over the whole of his property — (which was not the case) — “to Mr. Graham Bell which I most certainly would not have done or dreamt of doing — had not my wife and Mr. Fullerton put pressure upon me by urging that in return for this Mr. Graham Bell had promised to make a permanent arrangement for the future .”!!!

Now what were the facts.

(1) Mr. Home found himself deeply in debt with no means of paying his debts excepting by selling off certain Telephone stock which promised to be very valuable in the future. He and you appealed to me to try and straighten out matters which I did in the following manner.

(2) I bought from Capt. Home at the highest market price all his telephone stock. A portion of the money was expended in paying off his debts and the balance was to be paid to him in four 6 quarterly installments — subject only to the payment of the rent of your house — thus guaranteeing him an income for one year.

Capt. Home then settled upon you his household furniture and I agreed to settle upon you the great bulk of the Telephone stock that had been purchased from him retaining only a small portion for myself as I believe that this small portion if held for some years might become valuable enough to re-imburse Mabel for the large amount of money expended on Mr. Home's account.

You will remember that previously to this settlement there was great occasion to fear that certain of Capt. Home's creditors would obtain execution upon his furniture and turn you all out of house and home.

Now the single object I had in view was to secure such a settlement of Capt. Home's affairs that it should be impossible in the future for any of his creditors to touch your home. This I conceived would be accomplished by placing in the hands of Trustees for your

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exclusive use all your household furniture and a sufficient amount of property to secure the payment of the rent of the house, the landlord being a creditor who might trouble your furniture. The Telephone stock to be settled upon you was unremunerative at the time but I hoped that before the end of one year (the period of time I had provided against) the stock might be yielding an income or whether or not I hoped that by that time Capt. Home would be earning enough to pay for the rent himself and if this also should 7 turn out a delusive hope then — I thought that the delay of one year would afford me time to make some other arrangement by which it should be impossible for the landlord to break up your home.

The preservation of your home Sophie was the only object I had in view quite unmixed with any other. I have always said when you referred to your future — “One thing at a time — let us be content to settle this before we even discuss the other. When you were so ill in London and I tried to comfort you with the assurance that all would come out right in the end and that I would not desert you. I never dreamed that this would be construed into a sacred promise to make permanent provision for Capt. Home — yet he says in his letter that on that occasion “I pledged my word and honour.”